



ANNUAL REPORT 2019

April 1, 2018 - March 31, 2019



agirmontreal.org

INTRODUCTION

This report provides an overview of AGIR's activities from April 1st 2018 until March 31st 2019 (this time period is consistent with AGIR's fiscal year). AGIR activities include Board of Directors' general and sub-committee meetings, along with a summary of the various initiatives undertaken this year. This report provides an opportunity to present the various successes and challenges that AGIR encountered this year, and concludes with presenting our proposed action plan for the coming year. To begin, this report includes AGIR's "heartbeat" (basis of unity) and a summary of last year's Annual General Meeting (AGM).



AGIR'S HEARTBEAT (UNITY BASIS)

WHO ARE WE?

We believe everyone deserves to live a life free of violence, threat, fear and coercion. We believe that everyone is equal regardless of their migrant status. We believe in social, political and economic rights for all migrants. We believe all types of families have the right to stay together. We are aware of and working against systems of intersecting oppressions including, but not limited to, patriarchy, misogyny, racism, colonialism, xenophobia, ableism, classism, heterosexism, cissexism, transphobia, homophobia, etc.

HOW DO WE OPERATE?

We apply an anti-oppressive, non-judgmental and person-centered approach. We cultivate a respectful, inclusive, and welcoming environment where everyone feels safe(r) and secure. We build community with the participation of LGBTQ+ migrants. Our decision-making process informed and guided by the experiences and needs of LGBTQ+ migrants. We apply the principles of consensus-based decision-making and community organizing. We respect and value all individuals' journeys, skills, knowledge and contributions. We are committed to working in solidarity with organizations and groups that can help us achieve our vision. We are accountable to our members, collaborators and allies.

AGIR CODE OF ETHICS

This code of ethics is intended for AGIR personnel (board members, employees, interns, volunteers, etc.) with respect to relationships with each other and those accessing AGIR services/programs.

- ☂ I adhere to and promote AGIR's mission, objectives, basis of unity and this code of ethics
- ☂ I will adhere to all AGIR policies, procedures and guidelines
- ☂ I will follow through on my responsibilities to AGIR and fulfill my duties to the best of my ability
- ☂ I will communicate with AGIR as soon as I notice that I cannot fulfil my duties
- ☂ I will respect all AGIR personnel in addition to AGIR members and anyone accessing our services/programs
- ☂ I will participate in building an inclusive and welcoming environment within AGIR
- ☂ I will not harass (physical, sexual, psychological) or discriminate on the grounds of race, gender, class, religion, age, ethnic origin, sexual orientation or gender identity
- ☂ I will endeavour to be anti-oppressive and non-judgemental towards others
- ☂ I will strive to represent AGIR in an accurate and responsible manner
- ☂ I will maintain confidentiality by not divulging personal information that I have access to from my affiliation with AGIR (refer to AGIR policies)
- ☂ I will not engage in sexual relations with individuals that AGIR is supporting
- ☂ I will not use my role at AGIR as a means of intimidation, coercion or any other abuse of power over others

AGIR 2018-2019

COMPOSITION OF BOARD OF DIRECTORS (BOD)

AGIR Board of Directors 2018-19

Akki Mackay, Dalia Tourki, Carmen Ng, Claudio Bétancourt, Meryem Benslimane, Ramy Ayari, Stephen De Four-Wyre.

Board of Directors Consultant

Edward Lee

AGIR Support Team 2018-2019

Shams Lofty, Myloe Martel-Perry, Christina Olivieri, Jean-François Gagnon, Cynthia Beaudry, Ramy Ayari.

COMPOSITION AND CALENDAR OF MEETINGS

Calendar of Meetings

To ensure the achievement of our mission and priorities adopted at the AGM, the BoD met once a month. These meetings were organized and prepared by board members, usually the administrators. The administrators prepare the agenda, write the meeting minutes, and ensure people follow through with their tasks. Since AGIR's 2018 AGM (June 28th, 2018), the Board of Directors met on the following dates:

September 10th 2018

Board of Directors Retreat: October 19th-20th 2018

November 22nd 2018

February 13th 2019

March 31st 2019

May 8th 2019

May 23rd 2019



ANNUAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY (AGA) 2018

SUMMARY

AGIR's previous AGM was held on June 28th, 2018, in room 404 at the Centre for Gender Advocacy, in Montréal. This was AGIR's seventh AGM. During this AGM, AGIR voted to pass the 2017 AGM meeting minutes, and the year-end financial and activity reports. Eight administrator continued their terms (Akki Mackay, Dalia Tourki, Carmen Ng, Claudio Bétancourt, Meryem Benslimane, Ramy Ayari, Myloe Martel-Perry, Stephen De Four-Wyre). Myloe Martel-Perry left the board of directors to join the support team on October 16th, 2018 while Claudio Bétancourt left the board on May 8th, 2019. Edward Lee continues to act as a consultant to AGIR since February 2018.

THE ADOPTED PRIORITIES

1. Develop a strategic plan for the organization
2. Hire one or two coordinators and integrate them to the team
3. Review and adapt AGIR structure and support programs
4. Increase and support the participation of directly affected people within AGIR
5. Complete our commitment to participate in the research project

AGIR BOARD RETREAT AND VISIONING PROCESS

The AGIR board retreat was held at a cottage outside of Montreal on October 19th and 20th 2018. The two days of the retreat involved both AGIR board members and support team volunteers. Edward Lee, AGIR's consultant and Mariam Manai, the research project coordinator (of which AGIR is a partner) were also present. In total, 9 people attended the retreat. Both days included discussions around AGIR's future, the organization's priorities and the transition towards an organizational structure based on paid staff and volunteers, in opposition to the current model depending solely on volunteers. In addition to the discussions, both days also included activities such as a community supper and outdoors activities.

Among the matters discussed at the retreat was AGIR's funding by the Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion of Quebec (MIDI). Indeed, in April 2018, AGIR had decided to submit a grant application to the MIDI, in collaboration with the Conseil Québécois LGBT. The grant application was officially submitted June 1st, 2018, and was accepted by the MIDI in September 2018. The funds granted (50 000\$ this year, 100 000\$ for the next two years for a grand total of 150 000\$) aims at two main goals: (1) increase and consolidate AGIR' service offering towards LGBTQ+ migrants, notably refugees and asylum seekers. Those services would include: drop in services, a monthly support group as well as individual support; (2) train and increase the awareness of the MIDI' services providers so that they could best meet the needs of LGBTQ+ migrants among their clients.

During the retreat, the team has discussed this funding, notably in relation to the hiring of employees, the role and tasks that these employees would have to complete, the new structure of the organization, and the expectations from the MIDI as well as from AGIR and the communities AGIR works with. At this early stage of the MIDI-funded project, AGIR's priority was to create two paid positions to hire two employees who would complete the objectives of the funding, more specifically in regards to increasing and consolidating the services and in connection with the creation of the trainings and the education/awareness component. Ultimately, the work completed by the two employees will help to better serve and meet the needs of LGBTQ+ migrants and refugees. Two positions have therefore been considered: one position for the coordination of support services, and one position for the coordination and delivery of AGIR's trainings. Once that the mapping of these two positions was clearer, the board then planned the creation of a recruitment subcommittee whose mission was to hire the two employees. Other concerns, such as creating regulations to supervise the employees better as well as finding a professional in finance management, were also named and discussed.

MIDI GRANT

In September 2018 AGIR was awarded a grant from the Ministry of Immigration, Diversity and Inclusion (MIDI) of 50,000\$ per year for 3 years. The grant agreement enlists AGIR to participate in their PRINT program which seeks to provide services of integration for those who have received their permanent residence, refugee status or protected persons status. In order to receive the grant each year we are required to support a certain number of those with the statuses we have listed above along with providing training to organizations for newcomers as well as organizations for sexual minorities on the realities of LGBTQ+ Migrants. We will continue to provide services for all LGBTQ+ migrants who come to AGIR, regardless of their status.

This funding has allowed us to hire contract workers to help with the transition towards hiring two employees long term. One will coordinate support services and the other will coordinate external training. With these large shifts taking place we are busy setting up a functional workspace for them as well as trying to see through their vision of what services and training could look like.

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL TRAININGS

During this year and before the hiring of our external training coordinator, Joseph Tiedjou, three conferences have been given by our team:

On August 7th, 2018: One conference on AGIR's organization, its mandate, its values, and the work done with LGBTQ+ migrants. The conference was given by Dalia Tourki and Edward Lee to the law firm McMillan in Montreal.

On October 31st, 2018: Conference on life experiences of LGBTQ+ migrants, especially asylum seekers, as well as on the work that AGIR does with these communities. The conference was given by Dalia Tourki as part of the class 'Regulations and practices with refugees' at the School of Social Work at McGill University.

AGIR RESEARCH PROJECT

Over the past two years, AGIR has been involved in a community-based research project. Below are some details of the project and its advancements over the past year.

Project title: Supporting the Needs of LGBTQ Migrants: An Organizational Case Study of Service Delivery

Research Team: Dr. Sarilee Kahn, School of Social Work, McGill University; Dr. Edward Lee, School of Social Work, University of Montreal, Mariam Mannai, Research Coordinator, School of Social Work, McGill University

AGIR Advisory Committee members: Ramy Ayari, Claudio Betancourt, Stephen Dufour-Wyre, Dalia Tourki

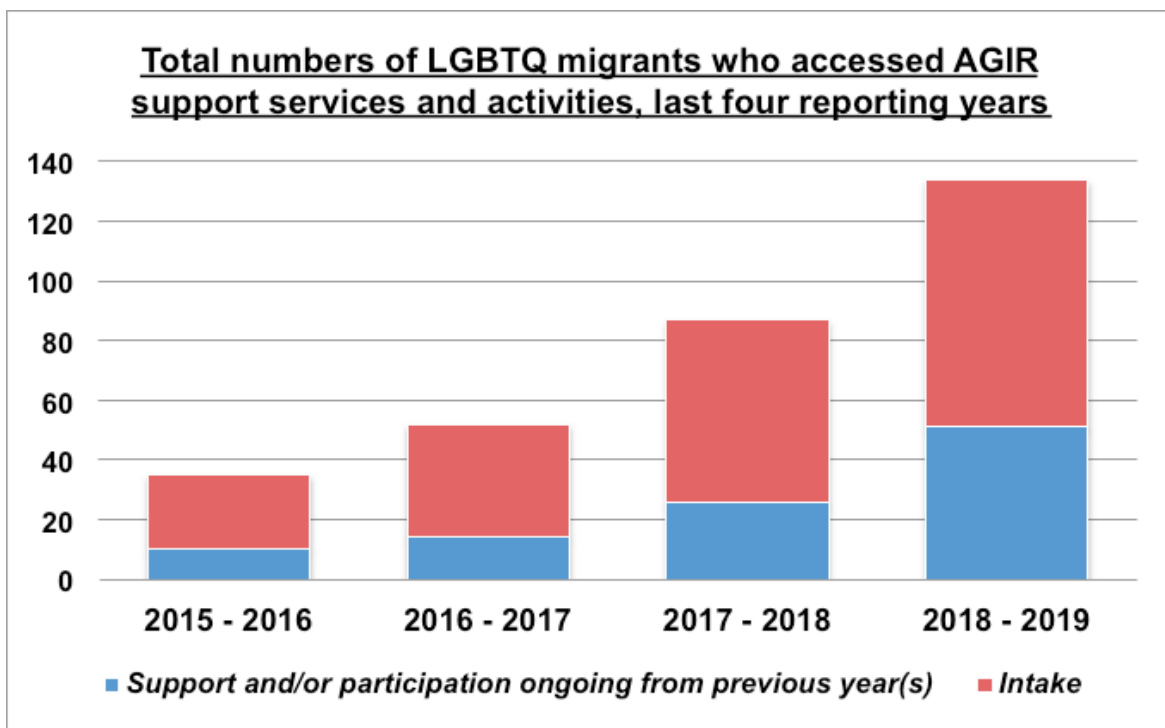
This project aims to document, through interviews and focus groups, the perspectives of various actors (i.e. supported members, board members, support team volunteers, etc.) who are presently or were historically involved within AGIR to assess AGIR's organizational structure and support activities. This project aims to document the perspectives of the following actors historically and presently involved within AGIR, which include: LGBTQ migrants who were supported by AGIR, as well as LGBTQ migrants and non-LGBTQ migrants who served on the board of directors and/or as support team volunteers. Participants also need to be in good standing with the organization.

This project has received ethics approval and is the process of recruitment for conducting interviews and focus groups.

SUPPORT PROGRAM FOR LGBTQ MIGRANTS

For the period of April 1st 2018 to March 31st, 2019, AGIR provided support services and activities to 134 LGBTQ migrants, originating from 32 different countries, who were progressing through Canada's refugee system or through other immigration processes. This year, AGIR's support services focused primarily on providing information and referral support, and our group activities on bringing LGBTQ migrants together to address their various integration needs with settling into and building their lives in Montreal and in Quebec.

Again this year, AGIR reached its highest number ever of LGBTQ migrants who accessed its support services and activities for any once reporting year since AGIR became a non-profit organization in 2011. Significantly, the numbers of LGBTQ migrants who have accessed AGIR have increased nearly 300% over the last three years: from 35 LGBTQ migrants in 2015-2016 to 134 in 2018-2019.



AGIR SUPPORT SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

AGIR support services and activities accessed by 134 LGBTQ migrants,
1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019

83

**LGBTQ migrants who accessed AGIR for the first time this year
(intake 2018-2019)**

accessed drop-ins, information and referral support, support groups, social events, a letter confirming their participation at AGIR

39

LGBTQ migrants who began accessing AGIR in 2017-2018

this year continued accessing drop-ins, information and referral support, support groups, social events, and/or a letter confirming their participation at AGIR

6

**LGBTQ migrants whose accompaniment support was ongoing
(started prior to 2017-2018) or were in exceptional circumstances**

this year continued accessing support groups, social events, follow-up meetings in-person and by phone, limited accompaniment, information and referral support, and/or a letter of support or a letter confirming their participation at AGIR

6

**LGBTQ migrants who had received accompaniment support in the past
(started prior to 2017-2018) and whose immigration status was regularized**

this year continued accessing support groups, social events, a consultation, and/or information and referral support



Support Groups, Social Event and Consultation

From April 1st, 2018 to March 31st, 2019, AGIR held five Support Groups for LGBTQ Migrants, AGIR's Annual Holiday Party, as well as a Consultation with LGBTQ migrants who had protected status or permanent residence.

AGIR support groups and social events offer LGBTQ migrant participants a space to meet and talk, learn and share ideas and information about settling and integrating in Montreal, make new friends and help break social isolation. AGIR's facilitated group activities integrate discussion in both English and French, and can often accommodate speakers of Arabic and Spanish through whisper translation.

Participation for this year's five support groups and the holiday party ranged from 25 to 41 LGBTQ migrants per activity. For each of these activities, about three-quarters of LGBTQ migrants who participated were returning to take part in their second or more group or social activity at AGIR, while about one-quarter were participating in an AGIR activity for the first time. Also, AGIR's support groups and social events welcome the children of LGBTQ migrants participants, and, this year, parents brought children along to three of the support groups and to the holiday party.

In March 2019, AGIR held a small consultation with LGBTQ migrants who had protected status or permanent residence, and who had been accessing AGIR support services and activities over the past several months. This consultation provided an opportunity for the participants to provide AGIR staff with feedback on their experiences of AGIR's services and activities, as well as their input about what activities and services they would like to see AGIR continue to offer and start to develop for the next year.

DROP-INS FOR NEW REFERRALS

From May 2018 through February 2019, AGIR's support program offered 13 Drop-ins for New Referrals, held about once or twice a month during afternoon and/or evening hours. During this year's drop-in hours, AGIR's support team staff were able to provide a total of 66 confidential meetings with individual LGBTQ migrants, in French, English, Arabic and Spanish.

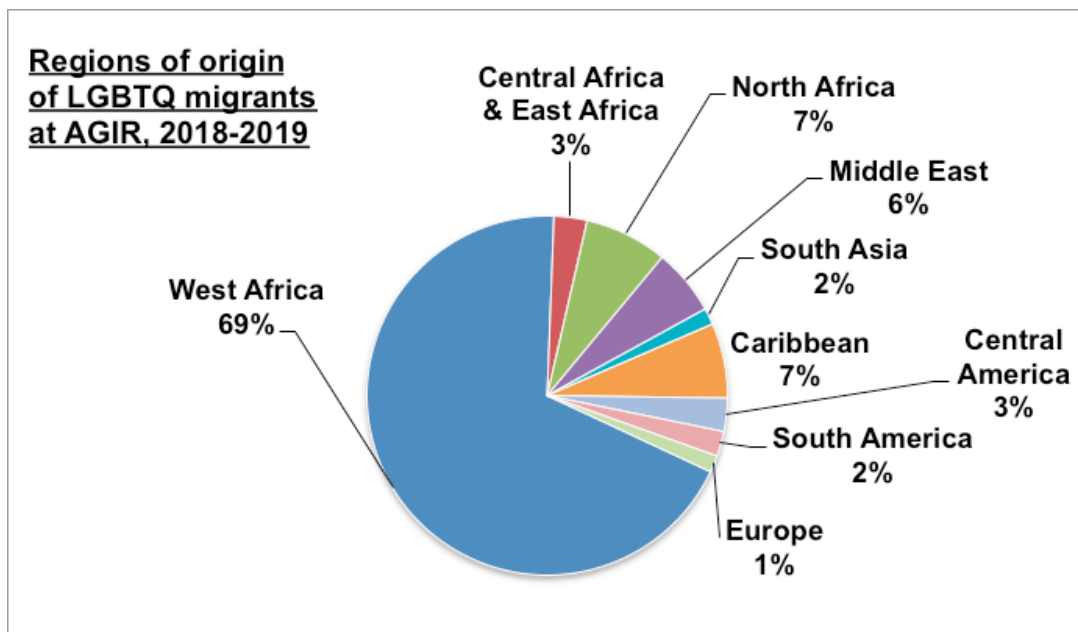
The majority of referrals to the drop-ins came from the LGBTQ+ Community Centre, as well as through word-of-mouth among LGBTQ migrants.

Drop-ins provided the opportunity for LGBTQ migrants who were new to AGIR to have a private and confidential meeting with AGIR support team staff, focused on active listening and on helping them assess their current situation and most immediate needs as LGBTQ migrants in Montreal. Support volunteers also provided information and referral support on the spot, or through a follow-up email or phone call. These confidential meetings were important occasions for LGBTQ migrants to ask questions and to express their worries, as well as for AGIR support volunteers to provide them with accurate information and better understanding about the refugee process and about various immigration processes, as well as about social and community services that they could access or had already been accessing.

COUNTRIES OF ORIGIN, 2018-2019

From 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019, 134 LGBTQ+ migrants accessed AGIR's support services and activities, having arrived in Canada from 32 countries of origin spread across several regions of the world:

- ☂ West Africa – Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo
- ☂ Central Africa and East Africa – Democratic Republic of the Congo, Rwanda, Tanzania, Djibouti
- ☂ North Africa – Algeria, Mauritania, Morocco, Tunisia
- ☂ the Middle East – Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Turkey
- ☂ South Asia – India
- ☂ the Caribbean – the Bahamas, Haiti
- ☂ Central America – El Salvador, Mexico
- ☂ South America – Columbia, Venezuela
- ☂ Europe – Albania, Italy



REFUGEE AND IMMIGRATION PROCESSES, 2018-2019

Refugee and immigration status/processes of 134 LGBTQ migrants, at 1st April 2018 or at time of intake during 2018-2019

115

LGBTQ migrants were in the refugee determination process

12

LGBTQ migrants had a type temporary status and had one or more immigration applications in process

7

LGBTQ migrants had protected status or permanent residence

This year, 115 LGBTQ migrants who accessed AGIR support services and activities had submitted claims for refugee protection and were in the refugee determination process at April 1st, 2018 or at the time of their intake during the 2018-2019 reporting year. By the end of the year, at March 31st, 2019, among these 115 individuals:

- ☂ 88 were still awaiting notice of the dates of their refugee hearings (19 of whom had been accessing AGIR for more than one year),
- ☂ 10 had been notified of the dates of their refugee hearings, scheduled within the upcoming one to three months (4 of whom had been accessing AGIR for more than one year),
- ☂ 17 had attended their refugee hearings (12 of whom had been accessing AGIR for more than one year).

Additionally, at April 1st, 2018 or at the time of their intake during the 2018-2019 reporting year, 12 LGBTQ migrants who accessed AGIR support services and activities were temporary residents progressing through other types of immigration processes, preparing or awaiting decisions one or more applications, such as: to the Refugee Appeal Division (RAD), for judicial review at the Federal Court, for an extension of their temporary residence permit, appealing a Removal Order, for Pre-removal Risk Assessment (PRAA), for Humanitarian and Compassionate consideration for permanent residence (H&C), for family sponsorship by their spouse.

Finally, 7 LGBTQ migrants whose immigration status had been regularized prior to April 1st, 2018, and therefore had protected status or permanent residence, this year accessed AGIR's Support Groups, the Holiday Party and a Consultation.

AGIR'S SUPPORT TEAM

All our hard work throughout the year would not have been possible without our incredible team! We would like to recognize all the different roles, for the most part volunteer, that AGIR Support Staff and Board Members dedicated themselves to this year:

- ☂ Support Services Coordinator, April to September 2018: Christina Olivieri
- ☂ Support Services Interim Co-Coordinators, October 2018 to March 2019: Myloë Martel-Perry and Shams Lotfy
- ☂ Drop-ins Support Staff for one-to-one meetings: Christina Olivieri, Claudio Betancourt, Jean-François Gagnon, Meryem Benslimane, Myloë Martel-Perry, Shams Lotfy and Ramy Ayari
- ☂ Support Groups and Consultation Co-Facilitators: Christina Olivieri, Claudio Betancourt, Cynthia Beaudry, Dalia Tourki, Ed Lee, Jean-François Gagnon, Meryem Benslimane, Myloë Martel-Perry, Ramy Ayari, Shams Lotfy, Stephen De Four-Wyre, Iyan Hayadi and Joseph Achille Tiedjou
- ☂ Board Members who contributed to AGIR social events: Akki Mackay, Carmen Ng, Claudio Betancourt, Dalia Tourki, Ramy Ayari
- ☂ Support Staff for individual follow-ups and accompaniment: Cynthia Beaudry, Jean-François Gagnon, Meryem Benslimane, Claudio Betancourt, Christina Olivieri and Shams Lotfy
- ☂ Staff training, knowledge-transfer, program development and policy development: Ed Lee, Christina Olivieri, Cynthia Beaudry, Akki Mackay, Shams Lotfy and Myloë Martel-Perry

And a very warm welcome to our new hires in 2019! Iyan Hayadi, AGIR Support Program Coordinator
Joseph Achille Tiedjou, AGIR External Training Coordinator

REPRESENTATIONS AND COLLABORATIONS

We have participated this year to several events which have allowed us to represent the organization and its work, but most of them were held after March 31st, which marks the end of our yearly report, and will therefore be highlighted in next year's report.

March 7th 2019: Concertation meeting on the international francophone LGBTQI network project at UQAM. We have participated along a dozen of other organizations from Quebec working on gender identity and sexual orientation issues, including internationally. The meeting was primarily aiming at presenting the project of this network and collect the opinions of the participants on the potential orientations of what aims to be an LGBTQI organization for the francophone world.

PROPOSED AGIR WORK PRIORITIES APRIL 1ST 2019 - MARCH 31ST 2020

1. Enhance the services offered by AGIR
2. Continue to integrate the new staff members
3. Continue to develop new internal policies that reflect the new organizational structure
4. Increase our participation in advocacy
5. Complete our commitment to participate in the research project

Contributed to this report:

Meryem Benslimane
Stephen De Four-Wyre
Edward Lee
Shams Lotfy
Akki MacKay
Myloë Martel-Perry
Christina Olivieri
Joseph Achille Tiedjou
Dalia Tourki